776 believed to be the creator and originator of all things but he is not worshipped. Birth and death are ascribed to his action. According to Roscoe, Nyasi is found in large trees, and in time of trouble or sickness offerings are made to him of an animal killed under a large tree; the meat is eaten at a little distance away.(1)

[777] Johnston states that the Luo believe in a supreme god, Chieng, which is the name for the sun.(2) Stam, however, relegates the sun to an inferior position and writes that when a man comes out of his house in the morning he spits to the east and then to the north, south and west and implores the sun to give him good luck.(3) Northcote states that Luo worship the sun and, to a lesser degree, the moon. A similar spitting ritual is practised when the new moon appears.(4)

It is impossible at present to give a comprehensive account of Luo beliefs from the scanty information available.

ANCESTRAL SPIRITS

775 There is very little information on the ancestral cult. Evans-Pritchard describes a troublesome ghost *(jacien,* pl. *jociendi)* and the Luo methods of dealing with it. *Jacien* is the Luo equivalent of the Shilluk *cien*, the Acholi *lacen*, Lango *chyen* and the Anuak *acieni*. A spirit which has been forgotten by the living; the ghost of a man who died resentful or angry - or of a murdered man whose kin have not exacted revenge - any [753 of these may become a *jacien*, and cause harm to those who wronged it. The 626] Luo regard ghosts as one of the principal causes of sickness and other misfortunes, and, since it is held that almost any wrong done to a kinsman may be punished by him after death, this belief is a powerful sanction of conduct within the family and kinship group.(5)

755 The diviner *(ajuago)* discovers the cause of sickness and, if it is due to a particular spirit, sacrifices are offered at his grave with appro-775 priate ritual. If the ghost is not appeased by this attention, another magician is called in, the *mugalu*. To protect the sick man's homestead the *mugalu* buries in or near it a pot containing medicines. In the last resort the *jadilo* is called in; an ox is sacrifices and the ghost warned that if he does not cease his activities his bones will be dug up, burned and the ashes thrown into the lake or marsh.

775 Normally, a ghost only haunts a kinsman, but a man who has been mur-783 dered may haunt his murderer. Purificatory rites are performed for someone who has killed a man in battle; these are conducted by a man called *jagut* who has himself slain a man in battle.

775 It is believed that some ghosts become nature spirits dwelling in water and air, while others occupy the gourds used by diviners and answer the questions put to them.

(1) Roscoe, *The Northern Bantu*, 1915, p.291.
(2) Johnston, *The Uganda Protectorate*, 1902, Vol.II, p.791.
(3) Stam, *Anthropos*, 1910, p.360.
(4) Northcote, *J.R.A.I.*, 1907, p.63
(5) Evans-Pritchard, *Man*, 1950 (July), No.133, p.86.

4: Hobley G-5 (ca. 1900) 1902 FL11 Luo FL11

Personal marks, etc.—They draw the six middle incisors in the lower jaw. 304
If a man does not have these teeth drawn it is said that his wife will die soon after marriage. The women tattoo a pattern on the chest and stomach, consisting of thin curved lines of dots on each side reaching round to near the spine, where they turn upwards. Males are not tattooed. The tattooing is done simply for ornament.

Circumcision.—They do not circumcise. If a man has killed an enemy in war he shaves his head three days after his return from fighting. He moreover 783
does not enter his village until a live fowl has been hung round his neck, the 727
fowl is then decapitated and the head of the fowl left hanging from the man's neck. Shortly after his return a feast is made to the man who has been killed, in order that his spirit shall not come and trouble the victor.

Dress, etc.—Unmarried men go naked (Plate V). Married men who have a 291
child wear a small piece of goat skin; this piece of goat skin is a most important 576
matter for a married man, for although practically useless as a covering he must on [606]
no account call to see his mother-in-law without this dress or she will be desperately hurt and insist on his paying up a goat. Even if he is properly clothed in European garments he must wear his goat skin underneath. Unmarried girls wear no clothes (Plate VI). Married women wear a tail of strings behind but not in front, like the Northern Kavirondo. Married women when they go to [574]
visit another village wear a goat skin slung from the shoulder, upon which curious patterns are cut. When a married woman first shows the tail, her husband presents her with a goat, which she sends to her father. It is very bad manners in a married woman to serve up food to her husband without wearing her tail, and the husband will probably refuse to eat the food. This rule even holds if the woman should be wearing garments of cloth. If a man touches a woman's tail it is said that he wishes to bewitch her, even the husband must not touch it; if this rule is broken it is necessary to kill a goat.

Many of the Ja-Luo affect rather a notable ornamentation of the ear; about 301
fifteen small holes are pierced along the outer edge of the ear and in each hole a 304
ring of brass is inserted, and on the front side the brass is flattened out like a small leaf, to the outside extremity of each ring is attached a blue bead. In the lowest hole in the lobe of the ear a plain brass ring is inserted.

For a long time I thought that these blue beads were ordinary trade beads of 301
the variety known as *kiketi*, but upon inquiry this was indignantly repudiated, and it was explained that these beads were picked up in the fields in the neighbourhood [172]
of the Maragolia Hills after a heavy thunderstorm, and that it was believed that they descended with the rain. Some of the chiefs also wear beads of jasper and chalcedony with a fine circular hole; these beads were formerly of great value and were purchased at the rate of one cow per bead; they were picked up in the same way. Their name for these beads is Nya-Luo, and it is thought by some authorities that these beads have wandered down in ages past from the direction of Egypt; in fact some of the more Northern Nilotic people tell you that they

5: Hobley G-5 (ca. 1900) 1903 FL11 Luo FL11
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B 791 773

that she left and went on to the Shekwi people in Nyole, where the great grandfather of Mgahanya married her, and she taught him all the secrets of the art of rain-making. The following is the genealogy of the family of rain-making chiefs:—

Agine or Ashue (married the witch).
|
Luchiri.
|
Namonwa.
|
Mgahanya.

The Cult of the "MKIA."

L B 291 171

As is well known, the dress of the female sex in Kavirondo is probably the most scanty in the world. Such as it is, perhaps its most distinctive feature is the tail, or "*mkia*," as it is termed by the Swahilis. This is common to both the Nilotic and Bantu races; among the former its name is "*chieno*," and among the latter "*livoya*." The tail is made of fibre, usually obtained from an aloe called "*tuoro*." Among the Nilotic tribes it is stiff, and fairly short, rather like a bottle-brush, from six to eight inches in length. It is usually ornamented at the top by a few small white beads, or half-a-dozen cowries, and is of the natural colour of the fibre. Among the Bantu Kavirondo it is much thinner, and is, moreover, about twelve inches in length, dyed black, and very pliant.

Finding this peculiar attire among two such different races, one cannot help thinking that it was invented by one and copied by the other, and, if anything, I incline to the view that it was introduced by the Ja-Luo, and copied by the Bantu tribes. The Lur people to the west of Lake Albert, who are very closely allied, both in speech and name, to the Ja-Luo, wear it. The Wamia people on the west side of Elgon, who are also of Nilotic extraction, wear a more elaborate and highly developed form, while many of the women belonging to tribes in the Nile Valley wear a kilt of numerous narrow strips of leather, which, one would imagine, might be fined down to the tail behind, and to the little fringe, often worn in front.

L B 291 484 576

There is an interesting ceremonial connected with this article of dress. The "*mkia*" is the special mark of the married woman; if, however, a young girl is going on a visit to another village, she can wear one on her journey, but must take it off directly she reaches her destination, and not don it again till she leaves. This is done as a sort of artificial protective mimicry; by wearing the tail she is taken for a married woman, and is not likely to be molested by anyone she may meet on the way.

L B 291 783

If a woman who has borne a child runs out of her house in a hurry—say, because she has been beaten—and goes into another house without the tail, the house she enters is considered unclean, and the husband has to give a goat, which

5: Hobley G-5 (ca. 1900) 1903 FL11 Luo FL11
Bantu Kavirondo FL4

B 291 [783]

is killed on the doorstep of that house, before it is considered to be purified; the meat is divided between the aggressor and the owner of the house.

A woman is not entitled to don the tail immediately after marriage, but has to wait a month or two, the husband then presents her with a goat wherewith to purchase this important part of her trousseau.

Among the Bantu tribes, married women generally wear a small black fringe of fibre in front, but the Ja-Luo married women very rarely wear anything in front, the requirements of decency are, in their opinion, quite fulfilled if they have the tail. Ja-Luo girls, in their villages, are quite nude, but when they go to market, or to a dance, they wear, for ornament, a small fringe of various coloured beads strung on fibre. The Bantu women consider that the Ja-Luo tail is not at all a decent covering, and often jeer at them on this account. The chief Mumia thought that the tail might have originally been imitative of the tail of a cow. The Bantu Kavirondo have a superstition that, if a woman wears cloth round her loins she will not bear children.

B [842]

THE "MIKA" OPERATION UPON GIRLS AMONG THE GUASANGISHU AND NANDI.

Ceremonies attending the Operation on "Nditos" or young Unmarried Girls.

B 881 304

The ceremony among the Guasangishu always take place about the time of the full moon, and is generally performed at sunrise. The proceedings commence the night before by a dance, and the young woman's head is shaved and oiled. At dawn, the old women decorate the young women with their iron necklaces, beads, and other ornaments. The young *elmoran* ("fighting men") of the neighbourhood come along, and the young woman kneels down, while each *elmoran* makes her a speech, and hands her his club and leg bells. The speech is to the effect that she has been brought up among them, fed and protected by them, and has slept with them, and that she is to bear the operation without a sound; if she cries out she will be disgraced among women, and must leave the settlement, but in order that she may not leave them empty-handed, she can take the clubs, etc., given by the *elmoran*, as a symbol that she will not start life empty-handed.

The people then proceed in a cluster to the scene of the operation, while the mother of the girl wails. The girl is then laid out on a skin, and the people stand round in a circle. An old woman sprinkles the *pudenda* with powdered wood ashes, and taking a small curved knife with a blade about 1½ inches long (Fig. 7) excises the *labia* and *clitoris*. Milk is then poured over the wound, and the old women run round, all crying out; this is done to drown any groan or cry she may unavoidably make. The girl stands up, and shakes a bunch of iron leg bells, and she is then wrapped in a skin, and taken away to her hut.

FIG. 7.

During the operation, the girl is held in a reclining position, her head and shoulders resting in the lap of one old woman, while two other women hold each knee. Young and old of both sexes are allowed to be present at the ceremony.

B [413]

10: Roscoe M-5 (ca. 1900)1915
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and secures a large following, and thus becomes a powerful chief.

Petty thefts from houses are dealt with by a medicine-man who discovers the culprit. He goes to the village in which the suspected person lives, takes an ordinary stool, sets it in an open space in the village, fills the hollow of the seat with water and covers it with an inverted cooking-pot. Having done this he goes through a formula mentioning the names of the families of the village, and at length mentions the names of the suspected family individually, until at last he names the person accused. When the name of the guilty person is mentioned, the water on the stool is said to flow from under the pot. The person thus convicted is fined and, in addition to his fine, he is compelled to restore the full amount of property he has stolen.

Adultery. When a man is accused of adultery, he is tried and, if found guilty, is fined an ox which is given to the injured man. An unfaithful wife, who leaves her husband, may be restored to him and he will not think the worse of her. Should she refuse to return to her husband, her father must either supply the husband with another wife, a sister of his former wife, or restore the marriage-fee. Unmarried women are given great license and are not considered guilty of an immoral action when they have sexual relations before marriage.

Murder. A murderer is discovered by means of the oracle. A medicine-man is asked to discover the murderer and, when he names the person, the relatives of the murdered man accuse the murderer. The accused is ordered to bring his son, and the medicine-man, after making incantations over a pot of drugs, gives the boy a cup of it to drink. If the father is guilty, the son will die at once; whereas, if he is innocent, the boy will suffer no harm. When a man is proved to be guilty or acknowledges his guilt, he is fined a number of cows and has to give his daughter or sister to the father of the murdered man. A murderer seldom seeks safety by flight when he has committed his deed, and often confesses his guilt without any trial, avowing the motives of his act. There is a special ceremony to purify a murderer. He is first separated from the members

10: Roscoe M-5 (ca. 1900)1915
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783 of his village and lives in a hut with an old woman who attends to his wants, cooks for him and also feeds him, because he may not touch food with his hands. Separation lasts for three days, and on the fourth day a man who is himself a murderer, or who has at some time killed a man in battle, takes the murderer to a stream where he washes him all over. He then kills a goat and cooks the meat, takes four sticks and places a piece of meat on each stick and gives the man the meat to eat from each in turn. When the meat has been eaten, he gives him four pieces of porridge made into balls and put on the sticks. After this meal the goat-skin is cut into strips, one strip being put on the neck and one strip round each wrist of the murderer. This ceremony is performed by the two men who are alone at the river, and after it the murderer is free to return home. It is said that, until this ceremony is performed, the ghost cannot take its departure for the place of the dead, but hovers about the murderer.

428 **Inheritance.** It is usual for a son to inherit property. While a man is still in health, he makes known his wishes as to whom he desires to inherit his property, and his wishes will be observed. Should a son be too young to succeed to his father's estate at the time of death, the deceased man's brother manages the property until the son is old enough to take control. Should a man with property die intestate, the members of his clan elect one of his sons to be heir. There is no fixed law as to which son shall inherit. It is not a question of age nor may the son of a particular wife claim precedence over the sons of other wives, but the clan-members are at liberty to choose the man they consider the most suited for the office. Women never inherit or hold property. The father's stool and bracelet are given to the heir and are the insignia of lawful succession.

[562 421]

Marriage, Birth and Puberty.

582 **Marriage customs.** It was impossible to discover the ritual of marriage or the groups into which a man might or might not marry, all that could with certainty be learned being that there are exogamous divisions within the tribe.

10: Roscoe M-5 (ca. 1900)1915
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The warriors are armed with long-bladed spears and use large shields three feet high and of a V shape, behind which the bearer crouches and is completely hidden. The shields are made of cow-hide and are so dried that they are hard enough to resist a spear-thrust. Each warrior is painted with red and white clay in fantastic designs and wears a head-dress. Some of the head-dresses are like helmets adorned with ostrich feathers, while others are small straw hats such as a child's doll might wear.

The battle is decided when the cattle are carried off by the one party or when the other party prove themselves strong enough to retain them. The victors dictate terms of peace and the vanquished pay a fine in cattle and women.

Treatment of a warrior who has slain one of the enemy. When a warrior kills another in battle, he is isolated from his village, lives in a separate hut some four days, and an old woman cooks his food and feeds him like a child because he is forbidden to touch any food. On the fifth day he is escorted to the river by another man who washes him, a white goat is killed and cooked by the attendant, who feeds the man with the meat, the goat-skin is cut into strips and put upon the man's wrists and round his head, and he returns to his temporary home for the night. The next day he is again taken to the river and washed, and a white fowl is presented him. He kills it and it is cooked for him, and he is again fed with the meat. He is then pronounced to be clean and may return to his home. It sometimes happens that a warrior spears another man in battle and the latter dies from the wound some time after. When death takes place, the relatives go to the warrior and tell him of the death, and he is separated at once from the community until the ceremonies above described have been performed. The people say that the ceremonies are necessary in order to release the ghost of the dead man, which is bound to the warrior who slew him and is only released on the fulfilment of the ceremonies. Should a warrior refuse to fulfil the ceremonies, the ghost will ask, "Why don't you fulfil the ceremonies and let me go?" Should the man still refuse to comply, the ghost will take him by the throat and strangle him.

775
783 It seems that normally it is only kinsmen who haunt a man, but any man who kills another, whether he be related to him or not, is in danger of ghostly vengeance. For this reason a Luo does not care to spear an adulterer found with his wife. Also, as Roscoe says, a man who slays another in war may be injured by his ghost if certain rites are not performed. These purificatory rites, called *gut*, are conducted by a man, called *jagut*, who has himself killed a man and been through the ceremony. The slayer comes back from the fight to his homestead with a crowd of his companions, who make a demonstration there, singing and pulling out the eaves of his mother's hut. His father and mother strip themselves and cover their bodies with ashes. The slayer remains outside the homestead and there the *jagut* pierces the beak of a fowl and hangs it round his neck. He then cuts the beak of the fowl and it is killed when it falls. The slayer may now enter the homestead, but not through the gateway. A special entrance is cut for him through the euphorbia hedge which encircles the homestead.

[p.87a]

775 He goes straight to the hut of the *pim*, the old woman
783 of the home, and there a goat is thumped and kicked to death. Afterwards it is skinned and cut open. The heart is extracted and bits of it are put by the *jagut* to the lips of the slayer and of some of his companions. He cuts strips from the skin of the goat and lays them along the backs of the slayer's fingers. He also gives the slayer medicines, among them a wild pig's tusk, which the slayer wears round his neck. The man is now purified and may drink milk again. [114] Roscoe's account is very different from that given to me by Luo, which I have recounted above.

775 Clearly there is much more to be discovered about Luo beliefs about ghosts than what I have recorded, but I can only add to my account that the word *jociendi* is sometimes used for ghosts in general—and not with special reference to troublesome ghosts—and that some ghosts appear to be thought to become nature spirits dwelling in water and in the air, and others to occupy the gourds used by diviners and to answer questions the diviners put to them.

[p. 87b]

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goals which have been carefully weighed and assessed as to the possible supernatural and social consequences. The Joluo believe that a goal does not justify the means if the means require violence, unless all methods of arbitration, conciliation, appeal to authority, both temporal and supernatural, have been tried and proved to be unsuccessful or inadequate.

Violence requires cleansing—physical and spiritual cleansing of the most exacting nature—to avoid the supernatural consequences (*chira*) which violence may bring in its wake. One case has been recorded which contains an excellent description of the ceremonial and ritual cleansing thought to be essential after a murder. This particular murder was planned and executed by a group which, after years of thought and effort to resolve the conflict without violence, finally resorted to murder. Obviously, with the coming of the European, other factors were involved to escape detection for an act which in the old days would have given the group high status within its own community and which would have created feuds or precipitated a war that ultimately would have been resolved by blood compensation or schism of the political unit and migration by the weakest group.

Violence which arises immediately and unpremeditatively from quarrels, drinking, infidelity, sex, marital tensions, or family differences, and which results in a death, is not regarded in the same way as predetermined action decided upon as a last resort. Ceremonial cleansing is still necessary but does not take the extreme form because these acts are regarded by the Luo as bringing consequences which affect the individual only, that is *kuer*, and not *chira*, which affects the group, clan, or tribe as a whole. Fortunately British law makes a similar distinction: that between murder and manslaughter. It will be found therefore that the majority of cases involving Joluo which have come before the courts of Kenya as murder cases are resolved and punished as cases of manslaughter. The Joluo do not, however, understand why many of those convicted un-

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der the head of manslaughter should be punished at all. They feel that a person who makes the mistake of killing in anger is or has been or will eventually be punished by the ancestors, God, the elements, by illness, bad luck, misfortune, or the like, in the inevitable nature of things.

It is believed that cold-blooded, premeditated murder brings *chira* to the group and is therefore punished by the tribe or by the segment affected. The group or the individual who took what they regarded as this calculated risk was eventually banished from the tribe or if large and strong enough to dominate the political unit to which the deceased belonged could force his supporters, usually his segment of the clan, to break away and leave the area. Luo kinship describes all members of the clan in the same genealogical generation as brothers; fratricide, therefore, has a very wide range.

Luo clans occupy and are identified with a geographical area. The clan and the area it occupies are usually called after the eponym of the tribe. Those living within a clan or tribal area who are not members of the clan or tribe are regarded as squatters (*jodak*) with limited rights. They may be unrelated squatters, but most often are found to be affines of legitimate clan members. Murder committed by such persons invokes immediate counteraction on the part of those who belong to the land by virtue of descent, *jogweng*. Cattle could be taken by force, the culprit banished or killed, and/or a woman from that group married by a member of the dead man's minimal lineage, his *jokakwaro*, to raise seed unto the dead man's name. This woman would be regarded as the wife of the dead man, her children would placate his ghost as father (*wuoro*), the physical father would merely serve as genitor.

One major clan, *Kakia*, of a powerful tribe, the Seme of Central Nyanza, descended from a woman of this type—but then not exactly of this type: what happened was as follows. A *jadak*, living in the clan area of Seme, killed the son of an important elder of the tribe. He fled to his own tribal land to

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because a ghost of a virgin who has reached puberty was regarded as extremely dangerous. The defloration, still practiced in parts of Luo today, was regarded as satisfying her natural desire to bear children.

The spirits of warriors killed in battle were placated by the tribe as a whole in ceremonial and ritual held at the borders of the tribal land (*thim*) by *poro bilo* and *tero buru*, where sacrifices were made and the tribal ancestors placated to welcome the ghost of the hero. The affair became a tribal responsibility, whereas normally death is regarded as a responsibility of the family or minor lineage segment.

A person who found the body of a man or of a woman would commence wailing as a closely related mourner. If the body turned out to be that of a person among whose clan the finder could marry, then a wife or husband was found for the finder in the belief that the spirit of the deceased planned and directed the discovery of the body to the end that the group of the finder should be united in marriage with that of the deceased.

Witches, if caught in the act of "running about at night," were killed instantly and with equanimity. The body of a person killed as a witch was mutilated by driving a stake into the rectum after which the body would be thrown into its village. An old custom still associated with this is the insistence of the relatives of a woman who died suddenly, or inexplicably, to examine her body for signs of having been a witch. Female witches are believed to be trained by their husbands to run at night with them and, because they are weaker, are frequently caught and killed. Bride-wealth may not be reclaimed or, if not finally paid, must be completed by her husband if a woman is killed under these circumstances.

Accidental deaths are regarded as having been inspired by the ancestors, and therefore require placation of the spirit of the ancestor divined as having been responsible. Deaths from sickness are believed to come from many causes, the chief of

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761 which is the infidelity of the spouse of the deceased; in the case of a child, by the adultery of its mother. Ritual cleansing of the members of the minor lineage is therefore necessary, as for *kwer*.

I mentioned above a classical case of homicide which illustrates what the Joluo regard as a calculated risk of the consequences. It deserves fuller analysis.

Case No. 1.

This case involved a group of nine related men. Only one of them was convicted, and he eventually was acquitted on appeal through lack of corroborative evidence.

A quarrel began between members of two major clans of the same tribe over the appointment of an assistant chief. The clan from which the assistant chief was appointed—we shall call it Jokoth—is alleged to have taken advantage of the clan—which we shall call Jokech—which was unsuccessful. The clans feuded in every way, over land, cattle grazing and so on, until the elders of Jokech decided, as a warning in the ancestral way, that they should burn the hut of a leading elder of Jokoth. This was done. The assistant chief arrested a member of clan Jokech, a person with whom he is alleged to have had a personal grievance, and this man was convicted of the burning and sentenced to a term of imprisonment. His sons fought hard and long to have him released on grounds of ill health and, when finally successful, took him home only to have him die shortly after. On his death bed, he made his sons swear to avenge his death.

Diviners and medicine men were consulted, and many methods were tried unsuccessfully for several years to bring clan Jokoth to its knees and to bring about the death of the assistant chief who had by now retired.

All was not well with the affairs of Jokech clan. Each new catastrophe was taken as evidence of the malevolence of the ghost of the deceased because his death remained unavenged.

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Finally, in desperation, his sons and a group of his *jokakwaro* consulted the head diviner, *jabilo*, to choose an auspicious day for the killing of the ex-chief and to collect the animals and materials necessary for cleansing after the deed had been accomplished.

The ex-chief was found and stabbed to death at the place named by the *jabilo* and his body was hidden in a nearby river. It was found several days later, and a witness was found who alleged that he came upon the group on the day of the murder in the act of disposing of the body.

Those who had had actual physical contact with the blood of the murdered man were cleansed as soon as they arrived home by the leading *jabilo* of the clan. He used a grey ash from burning the sacred *buombwe* vine. The minimal lineage, *jokakwaro*, assembled at the village of the senior son, who was the head of the lineage segment, and who had struck the fatal blow. There the following cleansing ritual was performed: at about two o'clock the following afternoon, a black sheep and red chicken were slaughtered by the head of the lineage. The sheep and chicken were first prepared by the *jabilo*, who placed his medicines in the mouth of the sheep and of the chicken before the sacrifice. The *jabilo* cut strips of skin from the animal and wrapped them around the spear and knives used in the murder. The spear had to be destroyed at sundown because the victim was related to the spear clan of the tribe. The meat was divided on the lineage principle and consumed ceremonially. The meat of the chicken was eaten only by those who actually struck blows.

The purpose of these sacrifices was stated by the *jabilo* to "keep the spirit of the murdered man from doing evil to the clan." It also cleansed the bodies of those who drew blood so that they could now eat with their families and once more participate in the activities of the village and clan.

After the meat was eaten, those present held a meeting to decide which old woman should act as a wife to the ghost of

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Homicide and Suicide among the Joluo of Kenya

SUICIDE AMONG JOLUO

We have discussed the Luo attitude toward death at some length in our description of homicide. These attitudes apply equally to suicide, except that they are extended to an association of the idea of death and its concomitant link with the supernatural to self-destruction, as an assurance or determination on the part of the individual to hasten the day when supernatural forces can be made to bear on the frustrations which led up to the act of suicide. The motives for suicide are thought to be to avenge the deed by the malevolent supernatural forces which at death become allied to the dead, who are able to use them against those on earth to solve problems which they found beyond human solution.

Throughout childhood there is constant reference to suicide, and in adolescence, early marriage, and old age the threat of suicide is an effective technique used by the Joluo to achieve goals or to avoid distasteful consequences. Threats are not often put into practice because they are used only when their effectiveness is relatively assured.

Unfortunately for the student, suicides are not usually reported to the authorities, although legally they should be. Therefore, few cases are recorded as in advanced countries in the coroner's court. The Joluo believe that suicide brings *chira* to a large segment of the clan of the suicide, and it is therefore kept as quiet as possible and dealt with immediately by the clan elders and clan medicine men, *jobilo*. The family of the suicide are forced to perform cleansing rituals and ceremonies before they may again participate in the social life of the clan. Data are for these reasons hard to collect. The few cases which were brought to the attention of the authorities were only those suspected of having been cases of murder which were made to look like suicide.

During a two-year tour among the Joluo tribes of Central Nyanza, I was able to collect 220 cases from informants. Of

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was regarded as a juvenile. The homestead was supervised by the levir of his father's second wife. The young man desperately wanted to marry. His stepmother, however, had spread the rumor that he had had syphilis. Therefore none of the eligible girls would have him. He went to a medical dispensary off and on for several months but treatment was not successful.

While he was away, a half brother, the son of the senior living wife of the village, married without his knowledge. The young man obviously had been under intense emotional strain caused by the rumors and gossip associated with the fact that he had a venereal disease. He was the senior son by Luo customary law and on marriage would be the head of the village. His half brother had taken a wife. This added to the humiliation and shame and would bring ridicule upon him whenever he met with his contemporaries for the rest of his life. This was too much. He went to the *thim*, the no man's land surrounding his clan grazing area and the place where the ancestors are normally placated, and there hanged himself from a tree.

His brothers and relatives were concerned about his absence and suspected what he had done. He was found by one of them after many days and his family and minimal lineage group completely destroyed the tree, including the roots, and there on the spot buried him and performed his funeral rites. The family was cleansed by the *jabilo* and the ancestors placated to receive his spirit by the sacrifice of a white cockerel and a black sheep.

The first son to be born to his brother's marriage was named after him to placate his spirit and to continue his name in the lineage genealogies.

Naming a child for a relative who had died is used by the Joluo in many ways, but only after consultation with the *jabilo*. It is obvious therefore that any misfortune which occurred to the family or to the lineage segment after this suicide was attributed to it. The fact that the first child born after the suicide

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762 553 was given his name reveals their attempt to avoid the consequences of his act.

762 159 684 The second case arises from a breach of customary law which in the old days would have meant banishment but which today brings social ostracism.

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Suicide Case No. 2.

The suicide was caught in the act of intercourse with his full brother's wife. The Luo believe that such an act involving members of the same *Jokamio* (that is, those descended from the same mother or grandmother) brings *chira* to the whole clan. The security and solidarity of family relationships are [578] threatened by the act because it involves quarrels which may lead to violence within the primary segment of the clan. In this case the brother did not tell the elders of the clan but merely threatened to do so. The guilty man returned to his own homestead and hanged himself in his hut. The house was destroyed [783] and members of the extended family were cleansed by the *jabilo*. The cleansing ceremony took the same form as in the first case, with the addition that the village was sprinkled with medicine in order that it might continue to be used by the dead man's family.

In the next case there are two clear motives which led to the suicide. The first, perhaps the most important, lies in indigenous beliefs and attitudes, while the second lies in more modern attitudes.

Suicide Case No. 3.

159 762 556 [661] This Luo was about 30 years old and had been employed as a driver for the Government for many years. Drivers in Kenya receive a relatively high salary, and in addition some take advantage of their position and make extra money by illegally charging people for transportation. Through these activities, he became a relatively rich man and was able to marry a total of five wives at his comparatively young age. He was also wealthy

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from the fear of consequences arising from the behavior of her son and, in two cases, there was a suspicion that the women did not in fact commit suicide, but were murdered by their husbands in such a way that it looked as if they had committed suicide. 762

Suicide Case No. 11.

A young woman was accused by her husband at a beer party of having slipped quietly out for intercourse with a man from the village. To prove that she was innocent, she hanged herself on a tree which was near the homestead. If she had been guilty, the Joluo argue, "she could have been cleansed, but she could not be cleansed for having done nothing." 762 159 684 783

Suicide Case No. 12.

A young wife, newly married, had offended her husband in some way and he refused to eat her food. (This is a customary curse and is a very severe punishment to a wife.) She threatened to kill herself if he did not eat it. He then took the food to the senior wife, who ate it, adding insult to the injury already done. The young wife went to her hut where she stood on her grinding stone and hanged herself from the roof. 762 159 578

The elders were quick to point out in this instance that since her death the village had been abandoned and many children of the lineage had died. All this, they believe, was caused by the ghost of the abused wife. 762 159

The third case involved a young girl who committed suicide because she did not wish to marry the person chosen for her by her parents. 762 159 584

Suicide Case No. 13.

A very young girl, little more than a child, objected in the traditional way to the union which her parents had arranged.

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762 his mother and took the *sim-sim* by stealth. When the husband came to collect it for the Chief, he found that a large portion of it had disappeared. This caused a bitter quarrel between him and the boy's mother.

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In fear of the consequences of what her son had done, the woman placed a rope, which was used for tying up one of her cows for milking, in a small basket and went out of the village as if to collect vegetables. She went to one of the largest trees in a nearby valley which was hidden from sight by thick bush and there hanged herself. My informant then described the scene as follows: "The first person who found the body caned it very hard and, after having cut the rope, started mourning. The place was soon filled with people and some were asked to bring hoes, axes, and *pangas* to destroy the tree. There and then people of the village and her lineage started their work and within a day the tree was completely destroyed and all the roots dug up from the ground and burned."

● [783]

"When I asked why the tree was being destroyed," the informant went on, "the elders told me that it was being done to stop more people from hanging from it, for we Luo believe that hanging is inherited by different people in different clans. If a clan had not had a person hang himself before, it is difficult for one in that clan to hang himself or herself. If a tree on which someone had hanged himself was allowed to remain, it would drag other people to it for the same purpose."

[824]

The next case involves a curse as well as domestic trouble.

Suicide Case No. 17.

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The husband of this suicide had been having considerable trouble with his cattle and many were dying from disease. The beginning of the illness coincided with the elopement of her daughter with a young man who had neither paid bride-wealth nor seemed likely to pay it. Her husband blamed his misfortunes on this incident and his suspicions were confirmed by